USA's Report on attack oa minorities in India

2705. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the State Department of USA in a report recently released on religious freedom has *inter-alia* observed that the India Government does not act effectively to counter attacks against religious minorities and attempts by State and local Governments to limit religious freedom; and

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto and the steps being taken to counter such type of official report amounting to interference in country's internal affairs?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) The U.S. State Department's Congressionally-mandated Annual Report on International Religious Freedom, released in October 2001 affirms that India is a secular state. It also contains certain adverse comments, such as the observation that the Central Government sometimes does not act effectively to counter societal attacks against religious minorities and attempts by state and local governments to limit religious freedom. The report has commented positively on the Constitutional provisions for freedom of religion and the role of the National Commission for Minorities and the National Human Rights Commission of India.

(b) Government does not comment on an exercise that is part of the internal process of a foreign government. In conformity with the Constitution and India's international legal obligations, Government prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.